

How Should We Deal with the Geological Specimen at Museum Shop of Natural History Museums?

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1. Purpose

The statement “Any geological specimen should not be sold at the geopark area” has recently been under discussion. How should natural history museums deal with the geological specimens? What are the ideals of museum shops in terms of social education? We should discuss this problem as a global issue.

2. Background and Issues

2-1: Background

While the purpose of world heritage is protection of sites, geopark’s aim is for education, investigation, spread of scientific interest, sustainable geotourism, as well as protection of sites. In 2010, “Statues of The International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme” was shown by geopark committee. It shows the purpose of geopark and its importance of education using museums and involving residents.

According to the statues of Geopark, “The management body must not participate directly in the sale of geological objects such as fossils, minerals, polished rocks and ornamental rocks of the type normally found in so-called ‘rock-shops’ within the UNESCO Global Geopark”. However, it has been said that processed things, except rough crystals, are allowed and there is no detailed guideline.

2-2: ICOM Code of Ethics

There is a description about dealing of geological specimen in “ICOM Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums”. It includes legal collection, consideration for conservation of geological sites, and notes of international trades. People involved in museums respect this ethics as a duty.

2-3: What are the Ideals of Museum Shops?

The present situation and responsibility of museum shops were written in a report of Japan Science Museum Foundation (2017.3). According to the report, “Museum shops should be an extension of the exhibition and education program of the museum...The important point of museum shop is making good atmosphere to let visitor feel they are still standing in the museum.” Also, the purposes of purchasing museum goods are written:

1. For a memory of visiting museum.
2. For souvenirs
3. For collection of fossils and minerals
4. As a material of education or experience
5. For collecting information of the museum (by pictorial records and research reports)

In this way, products of museum shops should be related with the collection/exhibition of the museum and there is a demand of contribution for individual collection for the use of social education and school education.

2-4: Activities and Current Situation of Genbudo Museum

2-4-1: Exhibition

Genbudo museum is the museum that introduces about Genbudo, one of the most important geological sites of the San'in Kaigan Geopark. This park is world-famous for the naming of "Genbugan", Japanese translation of basalt, as a type locality of Japan. It's also the place of the discovery of "Matsuyama reversal epoch". As a museum regarding its unique geological location, we try to let many people know wonders of the Earth by touchable exhibitions and experiences of rocks, minerals, fossils, and interesting stones. The other specific exhibitions are, the birth of minerals and rocks, fluorescent minerals, lithophone of Sanukite, natural-made stone flowers and picture stones. Also, visitors can learn about the history of the Earth and life, from the beginning of the oxygen-rich atmosphere (Stromatolite), active dinosaurs such as T-REX, to the ancient human "Lucy" through.

2-4-2: Rock and Mineral

We deal geological specimens in our museum shop. The mission of our museum is to contribute to let people know wonders of the Earth. There are many visitors to the shop. They come to see various stones displayed in the museum. School teachers also come to the shop looking for educational material to let students see real geological specimens. Most of minerals are used for mineral resources, not for selling at stone shop. When precious crystals were found, they are treated as geological specimen. From the difference of environment, various color and crystal shape are formed even they are called the same mineral. This can be known after you see various geological specimens. Deeper understanding of geoparks can be done by knowing this variation.

2-4-3: Current Situation and Issues

San'in Kaigan Geopark is the first region that aimed at participating in a Global Geoparks Network in Japan. Establishment of co-operating system of the people involved of Genbudo park, like adopting entrance fee of Genbudo park, is one idea for "Sustainable Geotourism". For realization of this idea, we can consider stopping the sale of geological specimens. For permission, it is said that the place of sale should be different. So the museum shop is located in separate building and managed by different cooperation. However, for the reason of selling geological specimens, our museum is not admitted as an area of geopark despite it is available for study and research of geoparks and geology.

The report of 9th National Conference shows the situation of Japanese geoparks. Regional development by "Geotourism" is hardly actualized by typical Japanese management style.

It is usual for all the natural museums in Japan including Nation Museum to exhibit and sell geological specimens. Exhibition, study, education, and Geotourism can be deepened by geological specimen. Why is selling a geological specimen prohibited in the museum set in geopark?

3: Conclusion

Geopark project is now became the part of official UNESCO program (IGGP) and the interest of geology and involved people are increasing in Japan. Both ICOM and geopark belong to programs of UNESCO. Museums of the world should aim at the same direction for better contribution of the region and natural science. For conserving and utilizing specimens that ICOM established in its long history, we expect that this conference is a good opportunity to discuss the relationships between Museum and Museum shop.

4: Pictures



Pic1. Genbudo park



Pic2. Genbudo Museum



Pic3. Exhibition of Genbudo(Entrance)



Pic4. “San’in Kaigan Geopark” exhibition



Pic3.Exhibition of minerals and fossils



Pic4. Museum shop(Entrance)



Pic5. Museum shop